

Dear Sir/Madam:

Thank you for holding this hearing today for Proposed Bill Number 648.

I am in support of Bill Number 648 to provide funding for case management services at Victory Gardens, a supportive project for homeless Veterans and families at the USA. Department of Veterans Affairs Newington Campus.

Victory Gardens will provide homeless Veterans a new start in new permanent housing apartments and townhouses with support services by Chrysalis Center, Inc. Chrysalis Center, Inc. has provided supportive case management to homeless individuals for 18 years with great success.

Your support of Bill Number 648 will ensure the vital support services dollars are in place for the Veterans at Victory Gardens.

In 2005 when I returned to Connecticut after serving a year in Iraq, with Charlie Company 1st of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, I was completely unprepared for the challenges that lay ahead of me. I had seen horrible things in war and now I had to transition back to being a productive civilian. That transition did not go well for me. No one around me really understood what I was going through and being around them made me feel like I was suffocating. I got to the point where I was going to pack all my things up into my car and just drive away. I felt that if I simply lived out of my car life would be manageable again.

Fortunately, I never got all the way to that point. I had a friend, who is now my wife, that took me in and She supported me financially and emotionally as while I got my life back together. I tried to gain employment but had a hard time maintaining a real job. Depression, and survivor's guilt, hit me pretty hard and some days I couldn't find the strength to leave the house and face the world filled with people that just didn't understand. If I did not have her support during those tough times I am sure I would be living on the street right now.

Chrysalis will provide that financial and emotional support to Veterans in need. They provide a safe place to live, and a supportive case manager to guide them through the complicated system in place to help them.

At this very moment there are Men and Women risking their lives to provide the citizens of this Nation, and this State, security and freedom from those that wish to do us harm. I believe we owe them every opportunity to restore a positive, productive life when they return home from their service. I support Chrysalis, and this bill, because they will provide those opportunities.

Thank you and please support Bill Number 648

Signed:

Brian F. Barkman, Jr  
30 Grandview Dr. Ridgefield CT 06877